Dealing with It

A Coping Skills Matching Game
Dealing with It: A Coping Skills Matching Game

DESIGNED FOR

Children with anxiety
Children with depression
Children with anger management problems
Children with poor emotional regulation

INTRODUCTION

Dealing with It: A Coping Skills Matching Game is similar to a traditional matching game but it uses cognitive-behavioral coping skills as its content. It is intended to help children identify various coping skills that can help them through difficult situations or feelings. Daily life has many challenges that require emotional management and behavioral adaptation in order to respond well to environmental demands. Unfortunately many children lack the needed skills to accomplish this. They resort to anger outbursts, aggressive behaviors, withdrawal, rebellion, regression, etc. which diminish their quality of life.

None of us were born with the ability to easily utilize coping skills when threatening and stressful experiences occur. Instead, coping skills are learned. While many children learn these skills in families, other children must be taught them by other interested adults.

Children can benefit from the game by

- Learning new kinds of coping skills
- Identifying specific stressful situations where specific coping strategies can be utilized
- Practicing frustration tolerance

GAME RATIONALE

Besides normal developmental changes and challenges, children experience a variety of problems. Some of these problems include abuse, parents’ divorce/conflict, sibling conflict, peer pressures and conflict, financial problems, depression, drug or alcohol abuse, etc. Children in these situations who lack healthy coping skills are vulnerable to a plethora of psychological problems (Compas et al. 2001; Eisenberg et al. 1997; Skinner 1995). Indeed, poor coping skills are associated with many internalizing and externalizing problems in childhood (eg. Holahan & Moos, 1991; Mooreland & Dumas, 2008).

Conversely, children who exhibit high levels of positive coping behaviors are better able to deal with normative and stressful life events (Compas et al. 2001) and better manage the stressors of living with multiple risk factors (D’Imperio, Dubow, & Ippolito, 2000). The use of positive coping strategies reduces suicidal ideation and depression (Logan,
2009; Stark, et. al., 2009), ameliorates emotional dysregulation from bullying (Spence, et. al., 2009), adds to adaptive family functioning and greater life satisfaction (Ambrosino, et. al., 2008), is associated with better health outcomes (Steiner, et. al., 2002), and contributes to overall resiliency (Everly & Brown, 2009). Overall, children with positive coping behaviors follow a healthier/more adaptive developmental pathway than children with limited coping skills.

Various evidence-based treatment approaches have included the teaching of coping skills. For example, coping skills are taught prior to the processing of children’s traumatic experiences in trauma-focused CBT (eg. Cohen, & Mannarino, 2008), and prior to children’s painful medical procedures (eg. Cohen, 2008).

Dealing with It can be used as reinforcement to other traditional interventions with children with both internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The skills that are learned not only assist children with current psychosocial stressors, they can last a lifetime.

**PLAYERS**

2-4 players, ages 5-12

**PROVIDED GAME MATERIALS**

Game cards

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS NEEDED**

Printer
Paper OR cardstock OR perforated business card stock
Scissors
Glue or glue stick (if using regular paper)

**BEFORE YOU PLAY**

If using regular paper:
  1. Print out pages 6-15 of this document
  2. Paste the fronts of the cards (pp. 6-10 of this document) to the backs of the cards (pp. 11-15 of this document)
  3. Cut along all the dotted lines (There are four blank cards provided for you to add some of your own coping skills.)

  OPTIONAL: laminate prior to cutting along the dotted lines

OR

If using card stock:
  1. Load card stock into the printer (Make sure that none of the sheets stick together.)
  2. Print out the fronts of the cards (pp. 6-10 of this document)
3. Reload the printed fronts of the cards into your printer so that the backs can be printed. Make sure that the card stock is facing the right direction. Print pp. 11-15 of this document.

4. Cut along all the dotted lines (There are four blank cards provided for you to add some of your own coping skills.)

**OBJECT OF THE GAME**

The object of the game is to match more pairs of cards than the other player(s). The player with the most matched pairs wins.

**GAME SET-UP**

Shuffle all of the cards together. Cards are then laid out in a grid format, face down in the middle of the playing area.

**RULES**

Players decide who goes first. This can be decided by flipping a coin, or doing Rock/Paper/Scissors, or any other fair method. Players then take turns flipping pairs of cards over. On each turn, the player will first turn one card over, then a second. If the two cards match, the player describes a stressful situation where this coping skill could be used in her/his life. S/he then removes the two matching cards from the game and sets them beside her/him to count later. If the two cards do not match, the cards are turned back over and placed where they were previously. (When cards are turned over, it is important for players to remember where they are for when the matching card is turned up later in the game.) After all of the cards have been matched, players count the number of pairs that they have collected during the game. The player with the most matched pairs wins.

**REFERENCES**


take a Bath

Talk it out with a friend

Talk it out with an Adult

Spend Time with a Pet
Play a Sport

Draw a Picture

Tell yourself, "It's ok. It's ok."
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